DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 417 901 RC 021 455

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TITLE It Takes Two: Co-Teaching for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students in Rural Schools.

PUB DATE 1998-03-00

NOTE 8p.; In: Coming Together: Preparing for Rural Special Education in the 21st Century. Conference Proceedings of the American Council on Rural Special Education (18th, Charleston, SC, March 25-28, 1998); see RC 021 434.

PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Cooperating Teachers; *Deafness; Educational Benefits; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Preservice Teacher Education; *Regular and Special Education Relationship; Rural Education; *Rural Schools; Special Education; Student Teachers; *Student Teaching; *Teacher Collaboration; Teacher Education Programs; *Team Teaching

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ABSTRACT

As the adoption of inclusive practices moves growing numbers of deaf and hard-of-hearing students into the regular classroom, rural schools are challenged by the low incidence of hearing impairments and the need for collaboration between regular and special educators. An innovative solution that incorporates professional and interpersonal collaboration is co-teaching. Potential benefits of co-teaching are summarized, and five forms of co-teaching are briefly described. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro offers a program to prepare rural licensed teachers in the area of hearing impairment. As part of their course of study, students complete a course in collaboration and co-teaching and apply this knowledge during 15 weeks of student teaching in rural schools. All of the five forms of co-teaching have been implemented at various student teaching sites. Cooperating teachers had generally positive comments that emphasized the benefits of co-teaching: increased reinforcement and feedback for hearing-impaired students, greater attention to individual student needs, increased collegiality, the expertise provided by student teachers' training in hearing impairments, and increased reflection by cooperating teachers on their own methods and teaching styles. Negative aspects included problems with cooperative planning and with classroom control. (SV)

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Introduction

Since the implementation of P. L. 94-142 (1975) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1992) and its Re-authorization (1997), the number of deaf and hard of hearing students who are enrolled in general education classes has escalated (Moores, 1991; Davila, 1992). Moreover, the low incidence of students with hearing impairments who live in rural areas represents challenges to administrators, regular educators, and teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students who are charged with providing appropriate educational services for these students. Thus, Boyle (1988) characterizes teaching students who are deaf and hard of hearing in rural settings as both a challenge and an "awesome responsibility" (p. 134). Fulfilling this responsibility necessitates collaboration between the rural educator and the teacher of the deaf that may not have been emphasized in each professional's preparation. An innovative solution to this challenge that incorporates professional and interpersonal collaboration is *co-teaching*.

Co-Teaching

Both general and special education teachers are finding it necessary to create alternative service delivery approaches due to changing philosophies concerning the educational needs of students with disabilities. In addition, restructuring movements have increased the impetus for expanding the use of inclusive practices in schools (The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996; Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation, 1997). Co-teaching as explained by Reddit (1991) and Friend, Reising and Cook (1993) constitutes a viable approach to providing educational services to students with disabilities who are educated in inclusive settings. Although limited empirical research has been completed to document the effects of co-teaching, Pugach and Johnson (1995) cite co-teaching as "...one of the most powerful manifestations of professional collaboration" (p. 193). Cook and Friend (1995) state co-teaching occurs when "two or more professionals jointly deliver substantive instruction to a diverse, or blended, group of students in a single physical space" (p. 1). According to this definition of co-teaching, two or more professionals refers to individuals with appropriate credentials, meaning two teachers or a teacher and a related services professional. Jointly delivering instruction refers to both professionals collaborating and delivering content information, with both individuals taking active roles in teaching. And lastly, a diverse or blended group of students includes students with special needs. Consequently, co-teaching provides opportunities to implement more

RC 021455

beneficial instructional interventions utilizing another set of hands and eyes, as well as, lowering the teacher-student ratio. Four points in support of co-teaching learning environments for students with special needs for have been identified (Cook & Friend, 1996 a; 1996 b). One point emphasizes that co-teaching increases instructional options for all students by means of bringing the strengths of two teachers with different expertise together. Point Two advocates that co-teaching improves program intensity and continuity by providing opportunities for students to receive in-depth instruction because they become more involved in their learning with two teachers present. The intensity and continuity feature of co-teaching is advantageous for students with special needs due to the reduction of the student-teacher ratio which enables students to spend more time in one instructional environment rather than leaving the general education classroom for services. The third point affirming co-teaching focuses on reducing the stigma for students with special needs because negative attributes are often associated with students' receiving services outside of the general classroom. This point is supported by evidence suggesting that students prefer to receive support services in the classroom with their peers (Walsh, 1992). A fourth point that validates co-teaching focuses on the opportunities it presents to foster mutual support among professionals so that co-teachers can work together to more sensitively determine and meet students' needs.

Five Models of Co-Teaching

1. One Teaching/One Assisting
   In this model, both educators are present, but one takes a clear lead in the classroom while the other observes students or drifts around the room, assisting students as needed. Limited teacher planning is required for this model. It is suggested that the teachers alternate the lead role to avoid the teacher assisting from appearing to be a glorified Teacher Aide.

2. Station Teaching
   This approach requires teachers to share responsibilities for planning, although instruction is delivered in separate locations within the classroom. Teachers divide the instructional content into two or more segments and teach at separate locations in the room. In this model, special needs students can be integrated rather than pulled out. However, with this model, pacing and classroom noise levels become issues of concern.

3. Parallel Teaching
   Teachers plan instruction jointly, but each presents the material to a heterogeneous group composed of half the class which allows for a lower student-teacher ratio. In Parallel Teaching, students receive the same amount of instruction in approximately the same amount of time.

4. Alternative Teaching
   In this model, one teacher works with a small group while the other teacher

instructs a large group. Some examples of Alternative Teaching encompass pre-teaching, re-teaching, enrichment, assessment, and guiding interest groups.

5. Team Teaching
In this model, both teachers share instruction; for example, they take turns leading a discussion, or one may speak while the other demonstrates a concept. It is necessary for the teachers to have a high level of mutual trust and commitment for this model to be effective.

Preparing Pre-service Teachers of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students for Co-Teaching in Rural Schools

The Education of Deaf Children Program at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) is implementing a 3-year personnel preparation grant from the US Department of Education (Award #H029A50026), that offers specialized pre-service teacher education to prepare licensed teachers in hearing impairment for rural schools. As part of their course of study, students complete a 3-hour course in collaboration and co-teaching (EDC 456 Rural Education II) and apply this knowledge during their 15-week student teaching internships in rural schools. The Program Coordinator establishes internship placements in rural schools with cooperating teachers who either have experience with co-teaching or who indicate a willingness to implement co-teaching approaches.

Co-Teaching in Student Teaching Internships with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

A variety of co-teaching approaches have been implemented in rural teaching sites during the past three academic years. All of the student teachers participating in the rural grant practiced the One Teaching/One Assisting model throughout their internship. Both the student teacher and the cooperating teacher were lead teachers with the other one providing support.

Station Teaching was more commonly used in elementary level school internships. For example, the cooperating teacher and the student teacher jointly planned reading or math lessons and divided the instructional content. This approach addressed the issue of equal teacher status because both teachers took active roles in instructional presentation. Effective Station Teaching at the high school level involved a student teacher in a food and nutrition class. In this approach, the cooperating teacher presented textbook material to a group of students while the student teacher worked with a group on food preparation in the kitchen.

The Alternative Teaching approach was utilized in most of the co-teaching situations experienced by the interns. It proved to be an extremely effective way of meeting the needs of many of the students in the classroom, not only deaf or hard of hearing students. Through pre-teaching, re-teaching, or making visual-graphic modifications for the deaf or hard of hearing students, students with learning differences and processing challenges received content information more readily.

Team Teaching was practiced in a variety of internships, including elementary, middle, and high school classrooms. An effective Team Teaching practice took place in a World Geography class in which the cooperating teacher possessed greater depth of content knowledge; whereas, the student teacher's strengths were in her knowledge of technology and how to present content material through visual and graphic displays. Another student teacher co-taught demonstrating the Team Teaching approach in a first grade reading class. In this application, both the cooperating teacher and the student teacher planned the reading lesson together and shared instruction time simultaneously.

During the spring 1998 semester, two student teachers are participating in co-teaching settings. One internship emphasizes the collaboration of an exceptional children's teacher and the UNCG student teacher, to serve students in a kindergarten class. The two teachers spend a great deal of time planning collaboratively, developing teaching materials and devising instructional strategies to better meet the needs of all of the students in the classroom. Co-teaching approaches, including Alternative Teaching, Station Teaching, and Parallel Teaching are being implemented in this particular rural kindergarten class. The second internship is in a Head Start/Exceptional Children's preschool. The cooperating teacher plans jointly with the student teacher. While One Teaching/One Assisting is demonstrated periodically in this preschool room, Team Teaching is also implemented. Alternative Teaching is being used, not only with the deaf student, but with other students in the program as well. The cooperating teacher and student teacher are taking advantage of Station Teaching which they have found to be ideal for their rural preschool setting.

Results of Interviews with Co-Teaching Cooperating Teachers

The students currently participating in the grant award conducted telephone interviews with nine regular classroom teachers who served as cooperating teachers for graduates of the program from spring 1996 until fall 1997. The interviews solicited input concerning the teachers' perceptions of the positive and negative aspects of co-teaching with a student teaching intern of deaf and hard of hearing students.

The cooperating teachers as a group expressed a greater number of positive than negative comments about co-teaching. Each teacher noted that the addition of a second teacher in the classroom enabled both the normally hearing and deaf and hard of hearing students to receive increased reinforcement and feedback as well as decreasing lag time in the teachers' responding to students' questions during group and guided practice learning activities. Thus, twice as many students could be worked with and their individual needs were attended to with greater specificity in a more timely manner than if the cooperating teachers were teaching by themselves.

In a particularly successful Team Teaching application in which the cooperating teacher and UNCG student intern shared a high level of collegiality, the cooperating teacher voiced that she and the intern readily "picked up where the other left off", so that the teacher input and guided practice portions of lessons flowed more smoothly than in lessons presented by a single teacher. Each cooperating teacher

welcomed the expertise in deafness demonstrated by their intern with regard to the interns' abilities to modify and adapt teaching styles and materials as well as vocabulary and syntax. Such modifications were universally felt to be advantageous for all students. Several cooperating teachers commented that their interns sharing their expertise and experiences concerning deafness "enriched" both their own and their normally hearing students' understanding of deafness and deaf culture, so that they felt more comfortable interacting with students with impaired hearing during and after class. In one high school setting, a cooperating teacher disclosed that she was grateful that the student teacher was a positive influence in alleviating a deaf student's extreme shyness and insecurity. The student did not interact with her hearing peers at all at the beginning of the semester; however, as the semester progressed, she gained so much self-confidence that she shared how it felt to have impaired hearing in an address to her classmates. The cooperating teacher expressed that the student would not have done so without the presence and participation of the student teaching intern. This same intern was praised for her ability to introduce the cooperating teacher to strategies to integrate technology in her teaching through the use of Internet activities.

Several cooperating teachers disclosed that they became more reflective of their own teaching styles due to co-teaching with their interns. One teacher with twenty years of experience stated that she did not expect co-teaching to alter her firmly established teaching style; however, she expressed that she felt more comfortable in modifying lessons to include special needs students.

Primary among the negative aspects of co-teaching mentioned by the cooperating teachers was the issue of planning. One cooperating teacher observed that it was difficult to prepare one lesson with several different plans for students of divergent achievement levels in a single class. Other cooperating teachers added that planning time was inadequate and that it was problematic for an intern in a secondary school placement to prepare detailed lessons for a content subject in which she had not been schooled. Several cooperating teachers mentioned that it was difficult for their students to adjust to the presence of two authority figures in simultaneous control of the classroom. This shared control often resulted in the students "playing one teacher against the other"; whereas, some students were distracted by the presence of two teachers.

Overall, the perceptions expressed by the cooperating teachers reveal that co-teaching with a student intern was a positive experience. The negative aspects disclosed in the interviews reflect areas of concern previously reported in the literature on co-teaching (Bauwens & Hourcade, 1991). The results of the interviews suggest that as a greater number of regular educators engage in co-teaching with teachers of deaf and hard of hearing students in rural settings, their teaching and their reflections on their teaching will be enriched. As one cooperating teacher advised, "Four hands and two heads are better than one."

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